

Papa John's Pizza Party Patrol

*W. T. Cooke Elementary School
Virginia Beach, Virginia*

The pizza patrol hit the streets of Virginia Beach last year in search of students with perfect attendance records. As part of Papa John's Pizza Party, 63 families from W. T. Cooke Elementary enjoyed pizza, balloons, and dessert *at home* as a reward for getting their students to school on time every day for a month.

W.T. Cooke's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) came up with the idea to help boost the school's attendance rates. Cooke serves a high population of families with low income, some of whom have difficulty getting their students to school regularly and on time. They decided that the best approach to solve the problem would be to implement a reward system for parents because they, generally, are the most effective motivators for student attendance.

The school advertised the program in a flier sent home with report cards, and in reminders posted in school newsletters. They also dedicated a bulletin board in the school to promote past and present attendance winners and showed video clips of student pizza parties on the school's TV news network.

Every month during the 2007-08 school year, school administrators reviewed attendance records of students from grades K-5. Teachers entered the names of students with perfect attendance into drawings by class. At the end of each month, the principal appeared live on the school's television station, Cooke TV, and randomly picked the winners from bins for each class.

School administrators notified parents by telephone if their student won the monthly class raffle. The congratulatory phone call also confirmed that someone would be home to receive the pizza when it arrived. The school staff contacted Papa John's, Party City, and Harris Teeter to order the pizza, balloons, and desert items for the party. Later that evening, a team of school staff headed out into the school's

neighborhoods to find the winning families.

Last year 63 students and 120 family members enjoyed a hot, cheesy, pizza meal because of their high attendance rate. Once the pizza patrol delivered the food, they spent some time with families documenting the party experience. Staff took pictures and videos to show on the school's morning news program.

By the end of last year, the Papa John's Pizza Party program spurred a significant increase in school attendance rates. Staff at Cooke observed attendance increases every month except one in 2007-08. Families were happy to get a night off from cooking.

"Thank you for picking me and my family for dinner. It was wonderful," a student said.

The program cost the school about \$100 to implement. Donations from local businesses covered all food expenses. The school used funds from its regular budget to cover incidental expenses.

Cooke administrators hope to continue the program next year. They would like to expand the program to have at least two winners from each grade level per month.

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